



**WELFARE PEER TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE NETWORK  
OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

**Developing a Marriage Initiative for  
Your State**

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This report describes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network workshop, *Developing a Marriage Initiative for Your State*. The workshop was held in Oklahoma City, OK September 17-18, 2002.

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### **APPENDIX A: AGENDA**

### **APPENDIX B: SPEAKER AND PARTICIPANT LIST**

## **I. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

## **I. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Network is an initiative funded through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance. The objective of the Welfare Peer TA Network is to facilitate information sharing between and among State policy makers and administrators and to establish linkages between organizations providing services to welfare recipients and their families.

ACF, with support from the Welfare Peer TA Network, sponsored the *Developing a Marriage Initiative for Your State* workshop on September 17-18, 2002, in Oklahoma City, OK. Participants primarily represented Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and child support staff from the following States: Iowa, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Utah. The purpose of this 2-day workshop was to create an interactive dialogue with State policy makers/administrators concerning their efforts and effective strategies to develop and implement marriage and healthy families initiatives. Specific topics covered during the workshop included utilizing survey data to develop a statewide marriage initiative, components of a marriage curriculum, developing interagency partnerships, handling resistance and skepticism to marriage program, and working with community partners to implement a marriage initiative.

### **State Needs**

States that attended the workshop were at different phases in the development of their marriage initiatives. Some came to the table without having started a marriage initiative. These State policy makers posed more philosophical questions about creating a marriage initiative, such as the appropriateness of State government involvement in marriage programs. Other States, recently starting down the path of establishing a marriage initiative, had practical questions about implementation, such as targeted audiences, community partners, and funding. Yet, other States with established marriage initiatives were at the stage of considering assessment of their programs through performance measures and benchmarks. Exhibit I reflects these different stages of State program development.

### **Voices from the Field**

During the workshop, participants had the opportunity to share information about their States' marriage initiatives. Although at different phases of implementation, many State policy makers/administrators presented information on promising practices concerning marriage. Representatives from our host State, Oklahoma, presented on the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative

(OMI). OMI is a public/private partnership dedicated to marriage – focused on strategies and services with goals designed to reducing the state’s divorce rate, strengthening families, and improving child wellbeing. The marriage education curriculum used by Oklahoma, the *Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)*, is a research-based approach to helping couples prevent divorce and preserve relationships.

| <b>EXHIBIT I</b><br><b>QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY DEVELOPMENT PHASE</b>  |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Initiation Phase</b>   | <b>Implementation Phase</b>   | <b>Evaluation Phase</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Questioning the role government should play in marriage programs</li> <li>■ Struggling to balance the notion of healthy marriages without promoting unhealthy relationships (e.g., domestic violence)</li> <li>■ Questioning why marriage may not be valued in some low-income families</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Determining a target population for the marriage initiative               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Broad vs. narrow</li> <li>– Rural vs. urban</li> <li>– Un-wed young mothers/parents</li> <li>– Non-custodial parents</li> <li>– TANF clients</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Obtaining buy-in from leadership for the marriage initiative</li> <li>■ Use of special commissions</li> <li>■ Role of State partners</li> <li>■ Role of community partners</li> <li>■ Interagency engagement</li> <li>■ Communication among government partners</li> <li>■ Funding for the marriage initiative (e.g., Federal, State, and private funds)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Determining appropriate performance measures to assess whether the marriage initiative is working</li> <li>■ Establishing benchmarks for success</li> </ul> |

Joining Oklahoma in highlighting their marriage programs were representatives from the States of Utah, Iowa, Louisiana, and Michigan. Utah was the first State in the nation to create a commission on marriage. The Governor’s Commission on Marriage gathers research on marriage-strengthening practices and makes recommendations to the Governor. The Commission also works with families on communication, conflict resolution, and counseling. In Iowa, the General Assembly and the Governor agreed to a provision that establishes the Marriage Initiative Grant Fund. Funds will be used for services to support marriage and to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. Louisiana recently established the Louisiana Commission on Family and Marriage to advise the Governor on how to promote marriage and family using TANF funds. Michigan has created a “*Magic Moment*” program, an initiative designed to intervene with young, fragile couples in hospitals at the birth of a child.

Throughout the workshop, participants identified and discussed lessons learned and ongoing challenges. Lessons learned included the importance of executive leadership to the development and marketing of marriage initiatives, and the benefit to using established community networks. Remaining challenges highlighted by the participants focused on cultural barriers to marriage, funding issues, and the development of public support for a marriage program. Despite these challenges, participants were excited about beginning, or continuing, their work in this important area and left the workshop with new ideas and resources.



## **II. BACKGROUND**

## II. BACKGROUND

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, which replaced the Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, devolves operational authority for welfare programs to States while maintaining policy authority at the Federal level. States have great flexibility in developing Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) programs designed to help families achieve self-sufficiency. Under the TANF statute, States must use TANF and State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds towards four purposes:

- Provide assistance to needy families so children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives
- End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Five years after enactment of the welfare reform law, States have had success with increasing the self-sufficiency of families. Through the use of Federal and State MOE funds, States have assisted many recipients in finding sustainable employment. In addition, working families have received needed supports such as child care, transportation, and housing supports. These efforts have contributed to unprecedented declines in State welfare caseloads.

A logical next step in solidifying the gains achieved thus far, and fostering continual progress is to focus on marriage and family formation. Three of the four goals of TANF are directed at marriage and family formation. Consistent with these goals, research on marriage and family formation has proliferated in the recent past. Among the research findings:

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 1970 to 1996, the marriage rate fell by one-third, from 77 to 50 marriages per 1,000 unmarried women. Similarly, from 1960 to 2000, the proportion of married adults declined by one-fifth, from 70 percent to 58 percent.
- The American divorce rate today is twice that of 1960, but has declined slightly since hitting the highest point in our history in the early 1980s. Meanwhile, the number of unmarried couples (living together) has increased dramatically over the past four

decades. Most young Americans now spend some time living together outside of marriage.<sup>1</sup>

- Today nearly 4 out of 10 first marriages end in divorce, 60 percent of divorcing couples have children, and more than 1 million children each year experience the divorce of their parents. One out of every six children is a stepchild.<sup>2</sup>
- Children living with single mothers are five times as likely to be poor as those in two-parent families.<sup>3</sup>
- Growing up in a single-parent family almost doubles the risk of school drop-out, difficulty finding a job, or becoming a teen parent. Approximately half of these effects appear to be attributable to the reduced income of single parents, but the other half is due to non-economic factors, such as a decline in parental attention.<sup>4</sup>

Children growing up in households without two parents present are at greater risk of academic, physical, emotional, and behavioral problems. Marriage has shifted into the public spotlight because research evidence suggests that healthy, stable marriages benefit children in a variety of ways. The workshop summarized within this report provided a forum for discussion of healthy marriage in general, as well as specific State marriage initiatives and strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> *The State of our Union 2001: The Social Health of Marriage in America*, The National Marriage Project: Piscataway, NJ

<sup>2</sup> Horn, Wade (1998) *Father Facts 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Gaithersburg, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative.

<sup>3</sup> Ooms, Theodora. *Marriage and Government: Strange Bedfellows?* Center for Law and Social Policy. August 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Ooms, Theodora. *Marriage and Government: Strange Bedfellows?* Center for Law and Social Policy. August 2002.

### **III. WORKSHOP SESSIONS**

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#### **1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Lois Bell, Director, Division of Training and Technical Assistance, ACF/OFA

John Horejsi, Federal Project Officer, ACF/OFA

Larry Brendel, Program Manager, TANF/Child Care, ACF Region VI

Raymond Haddock, Chief Coordinating Officer, Oklahoma Department of Human Services

Lois Bell, Director of the Division of Training and Technical Assistance for OFA, opened the workshop by discussing what has been learned to date about moving families to self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency requires helping adults find jobs; however, we must also examine what children need. Research has shown that children do better in healthy two-parent families where parents are active in their lives. More work is needed to build healthy family environments for children.

Larry Brendel, Program Manager for TANF/Child Care, ACF Region VI, described Oklahoma's promising programs on marriage. Ten million dollars in TANF funds have been allocated to reduce the divorce rate in Oklahoma. Oklahoma's recently released baseline survey on marriage revealed important findings. Other States also have shown progress in their marriage initiatives. At least two States, Utah and Louisiana, have created statewide commissions on marriage. It is important to continue work on marriage initiatives and to learn about what has worked and what has not from experienced States like Oklahoma.

Raymond Haddock, Chief Coordinating Officer of Oklahoma's Department of Human Services, welcomed workshop participants. He commended individuals and organizations involved in the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI) for their hard work and success to date. He then described OMI, pointing out that the Initiative has been successful primarily because of strong partnerships across agencies. Agency collaboration has been productive largely because all partners have the same goal of promoting family well-being and strengthening families.

John Horejsi, the Federal Project Officer for the Welfare Peer TA Network, thanked the State of Oklahoma and Mary Myrick of Public Strategies for hosting the workshop. Mr. Horejsi also thanked the Region V and VI representatives (Larry Brendel, Elsie Chaisson, Tom Schindler, and Carol Sedanko). He noted that this workshop reaffirms our commitment to stabilizing and strengthening families. Mr. Horejsi also discussed the origins of the Welfare Peer TA Network. The Welfare Peer TA Network began because States requested "State-Initiated TA." States wanted access to technical assistance and information about initiatives and

programs occurring outside their region and to learn from each other. The Welfare Peer TA Network has hosted more than 100 events focusing on topics such as urban issues, one-stops, faith-based initiatives, hard-to-serve clients, high performance bonuses, and IDAs. The Welfare Peer TA Web site highlights relevant policy research, innovative programs, related links and upcoming events, and has interactive question and answer sessions.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF THE OKLAHOMA MARRIAGE INITIATIVE**

Mary Myrick, OMI Program Director, Public Strategies

### **Introduction**

During this session, findings from Oklahoma’s statewide baseline survey were presented. Participants were also given an overview of “behind the scenes” decisions regarding the creation of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. In addition, there was an interactive discussion about lessons learned from implementation and operation of the Initiative, allowing participants to benefit from Oklahoma’s experiences.

### **Background**

Ms. Mary Myrick began the discussion by describing the motivation behind the creation of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI). In 1998, Governor Keating asked University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University economists to conduct a joint study on what Oklahoma needed to do to become a more prosperous State. Results revealed that certain social indicators were hurting Oklahoma’s economy. These indicators included Oklahoma’s high divorce rate, high rate of child death due to child abuse, and high rate of out-of-wedlock births. As a result, the Governor took steps to reduce divorce and strengthen marriage in Oklahoma. A steering committee composed of volunteers from the community was formed to develop a strategy for strengthening marriages. In addition, \$10 million in surplus TANF funds was committed for the marriage initiative.

Ms. Myrick noted several major accomplishments, including:

- In 1999, Governor Keating hosted the “Governor and First Lady’s Conference on Marriage.” Attendees at this conference were from the highest levels of State government and the private sector (30 leaders from business, faith, education, government, media and provider sectors).

- Strategies for a marriage initiative were devised by organization, county, and sector.
- Cross-agency meetings were held on incorporating marriage components into existing programs.
- Leadership from the entire faith community was involved, focusing on how to approach marriage within denominations.
- OMI has been tied to research and education through State Universities.

### Initiative Overview

According to Ms. Myrick, these steps contributed to the successful development of OMI. The initiative's training and service delivery system use existing government and community infrastructure as key implementation partners. OMI has made initial efforts to also serve low-income, disadvantaged, single mothers and, as appropriate, encourages the development of relationships with the father of the child, the new boyfriend/fiancé, or the child's maternal grandfather. High-risk new parents needing support are also a target population for the OMI. OMI focuses on married couples as well as premarital and unmarried (though potentially marriageable) couples.

Ms. Myrick explained that OMI uses the *Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)* marriage curriculum. PREP is a research-based approach to helping couples prevent divorce and preserve relationships. The curriculum is skills-based, teaching models on a variety of skills including communication, commitment, and conflict resolution. PREP is taught in marriage education workshops to different groups, including low-income families.

Ms. Myrick described OMI's training and service delivery system, which uses a three-tier model. The tiers are:

- **Orientation and consultation for agency administrators and State leaders.** This tier includes a PREP overview for senior level State leaders and agency administrators in order to achieve buy-in.

- **Orientation and training for social service providers.** This second tier includes training for front-line and program staff from the Department of Human Services, State Department of Health, other state systems and private providers. The focus is on information about both PREP and the OMI, and strategies for identifying and making appropriate referrals.
- Workshop leader training for personnel committed to providing PREP workshops in the community and to targeted populations.

### **Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce**

Ms. Myrick focused the remainder of her discussion on Oklahoma State University's baseline survey on marriage and divorce. The baseline survey had four goals:

- Providing reliable demographic data on marriage, divorce, patterns of cohabitation, and intent to marry/remarry
- Learning Oklahomans' attitudes about intimate relationships, marriage, family, and divorce
- Obtaining qualitative information on relationship quality
- Assessing knowledge and acceptance of prevention education

Current findings are based on telephone interviews conducted with a random sample of approximately 2,000 adults in Oklahoma. To ensure that respondents included low-income residents, telephone interviews were held with 300 randomly selected Medicaid clients from the DHS caseload in Oklahoma. In order to obtain a cross-State perspective, telephone interviews were also conducted with random samples in Arkansas, Kansas, and Texas. Ms. Myrick concluded by reviewing current findings:

- Oklahoma is a marrying State, with 82 percent of adults previously or currently married, compared to 73 percent nationally.
- Oklahoma has a high divorce rate of 32 percent (compared to the national rate of 21%).
- A higher percentage of married adults in Oklahoma have thought about divorce (56%), compared to married persons nationally (42%).
- Major contributors to divorce were cited as lack of commitment (85%); conflict and arguing (61%); infidelity (58%); getting married at a young age (43%); little or no



helpful premarital preparation (42%); financial problems or economic hardship (41%); domestic violence (30%); lack of support from family members (29%); and religious differences between partners (21%).

- Sixty-six percent of Oklahomans say they would consider using relationship education to strengthen their relationship or marriage, with a higher percentage of younger respondents saying they would (77%) and an equally high percentage of those receiving government financial assistance (72%) saying they would consider such services. In fact, the percentage of low-income individuals who would consider using relationship education is greater than the percentage of non-low-income individuals who would consider relationship education (64%).
- Surveyed low-income adults appear to hold less positive views of marriage and are more accepting of cohabitation than higher-income surveyed adults are.
- Sixty-three percent of low-income respondents believe that, if they were to marry, they would lose some or all of their public assistance/benefits.
- Eighty-five percent of respondents say that a statewide initiative to PROMOTE marriage and reduce divorce is a good or very good idea. A somewhat greater proportion of individuals who currently or in the past have received government assistance (88%) than individuals who have never received government assistance (84%) say the idea of a statewide initiative to promote marriage and reduce divorce is a very good or good idea. Support was strong across every demographic group, highest among African Americans.

The full survey report is available at <http://okmarriage.org/>.

### **3. REVIEW OF STATES' CURRENT PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES**

Jeanette Hercik, Ph.D., Welfare Peer TA Network

#### **A State Perspective: Lessons Learned and Remaining Challenges**

During this interactive session, Dr. Jeanette Hercik facilitated discussion of lessons learned and challenges States have faced in initiating new marriage initiatives.

During this facilitated session, participants were able to brainstorm, share ideas with one another, and validate experiences. The following two tables (Exhibits II and III) summarize States' lessons learned and challenges, as identified by participants during the session.

| <b>EXHIBIT II</b>                                  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>STATE MARRIAGE INITIATIVES: LESSONS LEARNED</b> |   |
| <b>State</b>                                       | <b>Lessons Learned</b>  |
| Georgia  | Using an established network increases participation in marriage programs   |
| Iowa   | Marriage initiatives can grow from fatherhood initiatives   |
|  | Community partnerships are important when developing initiatives  |
| Louisiana  | Representation from a variety of groups on the Commission for Marriage and Family has been key  |
|  | Support from executive leadership is critical to developing marriage initiatives  |
| Michigan   | Because each community is unique, agencies should be wary of trying to “cookie cut” their programs  |
|  | Incentives do not always work and/or impact completion rates  |
|  | Immediate results from marriage initiatives cannot be expected  |
|  | Community partners are key to successful implementation   |
| Minnesota  | The legal community should be involved in developing initiatives on marriage  |
| Oklahoma   | Support of government and leadership is key   |
|  | Important to have the ability to change, try new things mid-way   |
| Utah   | High level of support from leadership, including Governor, is key   |
|  | Need to provide services at point of marriage license acquisition   |
|  | Using Web sites to post information on marriage such as Utah’s Marriage site ( <a href="http://www.utahmarriage.org">www.utahmarriage.org</a> ) |
|  | Community support for marriage initiatives is critical  |

| <b>EXHIBIT III</b>                      |   |
|---|---|
| <b>MARRIAGE INITIATIVES: CHALLENGES</b> |   |
| <b>State</b>                            | <b>Challenges</b>   |
| Georgia                                 | Funding   |
|   | Promoting marriage is a complicated issue when clients have multiple partners                     |
|   | Conflicts between Federal and State agencies on marriage  |
| Iowa                                    | Using the word “marriage,” what is meant by efforts to support marriage                           |
|   | Changes in leadership and priorities concerning marriage  |
| Louisiana                               | Transitioning from theory to action   |
|   | Getting people involved and engaged in marriage initiatives with limited funding                  |
|   | Getting local people involved with national contractors   |
| Michigan                                | Discussion of marriage is absent from the culture, or not supported                               |
|   | Lack of curricula addressing issues for TANF moms   |
|   | The religious community is not a partner in marriage initiatives                                  |
|   | Maintaining funding for marriage initiatives  |
|   | Father involvement in marriage programs   |
| Minnesota                               | Diverse range of languages and cultures, which makes developing a marriage initiative a challenge |
|   | Political culture of Minnesota (e.g., three parties in the State)                                 |
|   | No dedicated funding for marriage initiative  |
|   | Defining a target population  |
| New Mexico                              | Getting a marriage initiative started   |

| <b>EXHIBIT III (CONT.)<br/>MARRIAGE INITIATIVES: CHALLENGES</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>State</b>  | <b>Challenges</b>  |
| South Carolina  | Obtaining buy-in for marriage initiative   |
|   | Changing priorities among State leadership can be a challenge with developing marriage initiatives |
|   | Funding  |
|   | Personal experiences interfere with buy-in   |
| Utah  | Time-limited funding   |
|   | Reluctance related to issue of separation of church and State                                      |
|   | Marriage often viewed as human service issue instead of workforce issue                            |
|   | Prioritizing marriage services among all other services available                                  |

#### **4. WORKING LUNCH: HOW DO HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS ADJUST TO CALLS FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AND SERVICES?**

*Moderator:* Larry Brendel, Program Manager, TANF/Child Care, ACF Region VI  
 Fairlyn Ballard, Chief Operating Officer, Human Services Center, Oklahoma DHS  
 Rhonda Archer, Social Services Specialist III, Stephens County DHS  
 Joani Weber, DHS Director, Pottawatomie County  
 Mary Jo Kinzie, Programs Field Representative, Oklahoma DHS

#### **Introduction**

During this session, representatives from the State of Oklahoma (including State and county leaders as well as field staff) discussed their experiences administering marriage and family-friendly programs.

#### **Session Content**

Ms. Farilyn Ballard began by describing the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS). The mission of DHS is to help individuals and families lead safer, healthier lives. Because Oklahoma has a high divorce rate, the Department is concerned about the well-being of families. In order to help families, the Department has used the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) as its marriage curriculum. DHS started offering PREP classes in January 2001: since then 350 people have been trained to teach PREP workshops. Ms. Ballard explained that PREP serves as a primary source of prevention for couples considering breaking up or wanting to strengthen their marriages and relationships. During PREP classes, the focus is on relationship skills regardless of whether the participants are married. PREP classes are

available to the public free of charge; however, many workshop leaders have been recruited because of their access and experience working with low-income families. TANF caseworkers are trained to refer clients to PREP classes.

Ms. Rhonda Archer, a social worker from Stephens County, OK, provided participants with in-depth information about the PREP curriculum, explaining that she is a PREP instructor. In Ms. Archer's classes, 99 percent of participants have children. Many of the participants in Ms. Archer's classes say they do not want to get married, and as a result, the classes often focus on relationships with children or employers. Ms. Archer stated that she teaches participants that communication skills are critical to healthy relationships. She also noted that the county partners with religious leaders and some of the PREP classes are led by religious leaders at churches. The county also provides participants with transportation to the classes and child care while they are attending the classes. PREP classes can be customized for various populations.

The presenters then turned to lessons learned and challenges, noting that it is critical to develop buy-in. They pointed out that partnerships inside and outside DHS are also critical, including partnerships with entities such as extension services, the health department, and faith-based organizations. They also agreed that it is challenging to work with clients who are not at all interested in marrying and that it can be initially difficult to get buy-in for marriage initiatives from some front-line staff. In addition, building capacity for the PREP program and having enough trainers are ongoing challenges, as is developing and revising policies so they are supportive of two-parent families.

The presenters concluded by noting that Oklahoma DHS is looking to expand the number of workshops throughout the state. Also, the Department hopes to partner with hospitals to develop a marriage curricula that includes parenting education and child development. The plan is to use such curricula with parents prior to the birth of the child. In addition, the Department is increasing its focus on father involvement.

## **5. PANEL: IMPLEMENTING MARRIAGE SERVICES—A VIEW FROM PARTNERS**

Rachel Neal, Marriage Initiative Coordinator, Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University

Marcia Smith, Executive Director, Oklahoma Coalition against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Reverend George Young, Holy Temple Baptist Church, Oklahoma City

Pastor Floyd Kaiser, Southwest Church of Christ, Stonewall, Oklahoma

Pamela Marr, Marriage Initiative Coordinator, Oklahoma State Department of Health

## **Introduction**

During this session, participants heard from a variety of government partners, including representatives from State agencies, community-based organizations, and the faith community. These partners described their experiences with family-friendly programs and marriage services.

## **Session Content**

Ms. Pamela Marr began by describing the Oklahoma State Department of Health. The Department's focus is on public health prevention efforts and improvement of child and family well-being. Given the Department's long history of working with a variety of family types, clinicians on staff have been enlisted to provide PREP classes. In order to provide these services to clients, the Department of Health partners with Oklahoma State University Extension Services, Department of Human Services staff, and others in the community. Ms. Marr noted that an ongoing challenge is getting participants to complete a full workshop series. To address problems of retention, the Department has offered incentives such as door prizes.

Marcia Smith, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Coalition against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, described her Coalition's role in Oklahoma's marriage initiative. Ms. Smith said the Coalition was initially skeptical about involvement with the State's marriage initiative. According to Ms. Smith, many staff members feared for women's safety if they were forced to stay in abusive marital situations. Ms. Smith noted that Oklahoma is ranked eighth in the nation for murders committed against women by men. Most domestic violence occurs between married couples or those whose relationships have recently dissolved. However, Ms. Smith explained that the Coalition became involved in the State's marriage initiative when it was made clear that domestic violence would not be tolerated and women should not live in homes where domestic violence was present. As a result of this partnership, the Coalition has assisted the State with trainings. Coalition staff members teach workshop leaders and others how to recognize domestic violence and how to provide referrals to domestic violence resources. Domestic Violence staff have also grown from this partnership and identified situations where PREP workshops can be offered in some of the Domestic Violence Shelters.

Reverend George Young of the Holy Temple Baptist Church in Oklahoma City described his church's involvement in Oklahoma's marriage initiative. Reverend Young's church was one of the first African-American churches involved with Oklahoma's marriage initiative. Reverend

Young teaches PREP classes that are sometimes held at the church but also at local housing projects and other venues. Reverend Young recommended pastor involvement as a strategy to increase African-American involvement in marriage initiatives and shared that his involvement with the OMI has changed his ministry.

Ms. Rachel Neal, Marriage Initiative Coordinator with the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service, described how extension services in Oklahoma works with public school systems, TANF agencies, and the Department of Corrections to deliver PREP workshops. Ms. Neal acknowledged that it is a challenge to enroll participants in the PREP classes, and she recommended forming relationships with established groups, such as schools. Ms. Neal also talked about the positive results of the PREP program, particularly in the schools. High school students have said they are using what they've learned in the classes in their relationships with their parents and others. In the future, in order to expand the number of PREP classes offered, extension services hopes to partner with the business community and other social programs.

Pastor Floyd Kaiser of Southwest Church of Christ in Stonewall, OK, described his church's participation in the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. Pastor Kaiser explained that he is a PREP instructor and some of the classes are held at the church, while others are held at schools. Pastor Kaiser is working on increasing enrollment in PREP classes. In order to get more people involved, his church is using a variety of strategies, including setting up booths at fairs to distribute information.

The presenters noted that Oklahoma's marriage initiative does not force people to get married. Instead, the focus is on stabilizing and improving marriages. The presenters also pointed out that community partner involvement is critical to getting a marriage initiative started. Churches are important partners because many citizens say they will turn to their church to support and strengthen their marriages. The presenters also identified several ongoing challenges such as enrollment and retention in PREP classes. Also, adaptations of the PREP curriculum are planned in the future.

## **6. WHAT STATES CAN DO: OPTIONS FROM POLICY REVIEW TO PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

Barbara Delvaney, Strengthening Families with Children Born Out-of-Wedlock Project, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

## **Introduction**

During this session, participants learned about effective strategies for designing and evaluating marriage initiatives.

Ms. Delvaney began her presentation by describing the Strengthening Families with Children Born Out-of-Wedlock initiative. The initiative is primarily sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation and the Office of Child Support Enforcement, in the Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. The initiative's purpose is to inform the design and evaluation of interventions to strengthen families and support healthy marriages. Study activities include expert panels; literature reviews; extensive field work, including interviews with staff from numerous programs; and development of a conceptual framework. Also, technical assistance has been provided on relationship skills and program delivery infrastructure.

## **Intervention Strategies**

Ms. Delvaney then discussed the differences between two intervention strategies: community-wide healthy marriage initiatives and targeted healthy marriage programs. Community-wide healthy marriage initiatives focus on building public support and changing community norms and perceptions about marriage. Targeted healthy marriage programs focus on providing direct services to improve the quality of couples' relationships and encourage healthy marriages.

## **Opportunities for Intervention and Identifying Target Populations**

Ms. Delvaney next described opportunities for interventions to help low-income families build strong and healthy marriages. She noted that marriage is viewed as an ideal; all socioeconomic classes value marriage and agree marriage is better for children. She also pointed out that there is receptiveness to relationship education. Such receptiveness is supported by findings from the Oklahoma survey.

Ms. Delvaney encouraged workshop participants to start interventions early. Most fathers are involved during the pregnancy and most un-wed parents are romantically involved at the time the child is born. At the time of birth, most couples expect to marry each other.

Ms. Delvaney also encouraged participants, when identifying target populations for a marriage initiative, to think about how services can be tailored to particular low-income groups. For example, it is more difficult for an individual with multiple partners to access marriage.

### **Targeted Programs to Promote Healthy Marriages**

Ms. Delvaney next examined the characteristics of targeted programs to promote healthy marriages. She stated that direct services to improve relationship quality and promote healthy marriages are important, as are services to improve “marriage-ability” (for example, education, employment skills, parenting skills, treatment for substance abuse, and domestic violence services). She also asserted that public policy changes (for example, in the areas of TANF eligibility, benefits, and child support) have been and continue to be helpful.

### **Key Design Issues**

Ms. Delvaney then provided workshop participants with information on how to design marriage programs and/or change existing programs to focus on marriage. She recommended the following:

- **Incorporate Marriage Education.** In education efforts, discuss the fact that a focus on marriage poses a dilemma for some programs and staff, including skepticism about government’s role in marriage. Alleviate staff concerns by stressing the voluntary nature of intervention, providing information on marriage research, and tailoring interventions.
- **Assess Couples and Families.** Screen for issues such as romantic involvement, multiple partner involvement, young age of parents, and domestic violence. Such screening may help with target population identification.
- **Anticipate Service Delivery Issues.** The context and setting of service delivery needs to be considered (for example, health care, welfare program, early childhood education program, or faith-based program setting). She noted that it is also important to think about the mode of service delivery (for example, classes, lectures, seminars, home visits, or support groups).

### **Conclusion**

Ms. Delvaney concluded her presentation by making the following points:

- The science of healthy couples and relationships is strong and growing.



- Low-income families have specific challenges that affect their relationships.
- There is increasing State interest in programs for new, un-wed parents.

## **7. GETTING YOUR MARRIAGE INITIATIVE STARTED**

Howard Hendrick, Oklahoma Cabinet Secretary for Health and Human Services and Director, Department of Human Services

### **Introduction**

During this session, participants continued to learn more about Oklahoma's experience with its marriage initiative. Specifically, Commissioner Hendrick shared information about effective implementation strategies and other lessons learned.

Commissioner Hendrick began his discussion by arguing that marriage and healthy family promotion is a preventive strategy for human services, pointing out that if marriages are strengthened, the demand for social services will decline. He reviewed the following:

- Research indicates that married adults live longer and are better off financially.
- Children from two-parent families have better outcomes.
- The Oklahoma Marriage Survey indicates that 34 percent of those presently married have thought about divorce; 92 percent of these respondents reported that they were glad they had stayed in their relationships.
- According to census data, cohabiting couples are a fast-growing demographic.

### **Role of PREP Training in OMI**

Commissioner Hendrick described PREP, noting that PREP teaches that not all conflict is bad. Constructive conflict is good for healthy marriages. PREP classes teach participants how to understand differences between partners and how to navigate relationships. He explained that, for prevention purposes, PREP teaches participants not to belittle and not to talk with partners when they are angry. PREP also encourages use of the "speaker/listener" technique, in which one partner listens while the other speaks and then partners switch roles. PREP also instructs participants to ensure that speakers feel they have been heard. In terms of relationship enhancement, PREP encourages participants to focus on why they became involved with each other. PREP also includes attention to domestic violence.

Commissioner Hendrick concluded his discussion by talking about the initial successes of OMI. In Oklahoma in 1993, only 19 percent of out-of-wedlock births had paternity established, compared to a national rate of 45 percent. Today, the percentage of paternity establishment for out-of-wedlock births in Oklahoma has increased to 90 percent. Commissioner Hendrick stated that this increase can be attributed to partnerships between the State and hospitals focusing on establishment of voluntary paternity.

## **8. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

Bill Coffin, Special Assistant for Marriage Education, ACF/OAS

Mary Myrick, OMI Program Director, Public Strategies

### **Introduction**

During this session, participants learned more about the PREP curriculum, as well as technical assistance and funding options for marriage initiatives. In addition, strategies for putting marriage on the public agenda were shared. Finally, participants brainstormed appropriate next steps within their States.

### **PREP Marriage Curriculum**

Mr. Bill Coffin began the discussion by reviewing the speaker-listener technique that is part of the PREP marriage curriculum at the request of participants. This technique includes the following rules:

Rules for the speaker:

- Speak for yourself, don't mindread!
- Keep statements brief. Don't go on and on.
- Stop to let the listener paraphrase.

Rules for the listener:

- Paraphrase what you hear.
- Focus on the speaker's message. Don't rebut.

Rules for both:

- The speaker has the floor.
- Speaker keeps the floor while the listener paraphrases.
- Share the floor.

Mr. Coffin then turned to a discussion of OMI and emphasized that the Oklahoma model is not the only model for implementing a marriage initiative. He encouraged participants to learn from the Oklahoma model, but to also research other methods of delivering marriage services.

### **Funding for Marriage Initiatives**

Mr. Coffin next described funding for marriage initiatives. He emphasized that participants do not need to wait for TANF reauthorization in order to start marriage initiatives. Currently, the Office of Refugee Resettlement has a \$3 million set-aside for healthy family formation. Funds will be awarded to States through sub-grants to community-based organizations and programs that promote healthy refugee families. These funds are targeted for orientation, education, and counseling services to help maintain healthy marriages, promote responsible fatherhood, and secure the well-being of families in the refugee community. Another source of funding for marriage initiatives is the Children's Bureau. The Children's Bureau's Safe and Stable Families Program has issued \$385 million in grant awards to States that allow for programs to promote healthy marriages. Examples of programs that may be funded include community marriage initiatives, programs for newlyweds, and parenting programs.

Mr. Coffin then described technical assistance for State healthy marriage initiatives, available from the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Technical assistance and evaluation design options will be available to community-level demonstration projects and coalitions to promote and maintain healthy marriages, family formation, and responsible fatherhood. Assistance includes the following:

- How to collaborate with State and local government, as well as community- and faith-based organizations, to create and sustain community-level coalitions
- How to identify, and communicate to local partners, best practices relating to marriage promotion, family formation, and responsible fatherhood

- Ongoing capacity-building activities to support demonstrations
- The development of evaluation design options to examine implementation and community impacts.

Mr. Coffin indicated that States that are interested in technical assistance for healthy marriage initiatives should contact Joseph Grubbs at the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

Ms. Mary Myrick, Public Strategies President, reviewed a list of steps States should follow in order to put marriage on the public agenda. These steps are displayed in Exhibit IV.

#### EXHIBIT IV PUTTING MARRIAGE ON THE PUBLIC AGENDA

- **Start your marriage initiative today:** Do not wait for TANF reauthorization, budget relief, or more time. Commit to making marriage policy and practices a priority.
- **Commit to learning about and understanding the field of marriage education and research:** Read research on marriage.
- **Use the information presented at this workshop:** Brief groups in your home State on what was discussed at the workshop. Be strategic. Identify a core group of people within the agency who can determine policy and programs and share with them what you learned from the Welfare Peer TA Roundtable.
- **Establish your own marriage initiative planning team, formally or informally:** Commit to guiding study and debate efforts that will obtain broad support for marriage. Think about who was most receptive during your briefings. Think about who on your agency's team will be ultimately successful.
- **Review agency's programs with an eye toward marriage:** Conduct internal audits to determine what programs can do to be more marriage friendly. Offer comprehensive, multi-level training programs on couples and marriage to administrators and front-line staff. Share ideas about Federal policy changes with ACF regional office personnel.
- **Identify other government agencies, community partners, and faith communities who might be interested in joining a broad-based marriage initiative effort:** Find organizations in your community whose missions includes marriage. Find out what resources these organizations have on marriage. What systems or programs does your agency have in place to partner with them now or in the future?
- **Gather marriage data for your State:** Compile and publish research on marriage, cohabitation, and divorce. Data and research should inform discussions of marriage. Facts are needed to shape decisions.

### EXHIBIT IV (CONT.) PUTTING MARRIAGE ON THE PUBLIC AGENDA

- **Work with your marriage initiative team to develop a strategy to educate the public, stimulate debate, discuss goals, and put forward constructive proposals:** Use the technical assistance available from the Administration for Children and Families. The debate on marriage should include voices from a broad spectrum of people who have a stake in marriage and families.
- **Develop a big vision and manageable action plan:** Consider community models as pilot programs to test your ideas. Support the development of pilot demonstration projects in new or existing programs that would aim to strengthen couple relationships and marriage in high-risk, vulnerable populations.
- **Share lessons learned:** Consult with other States on lessons learned for implementing marriage strategies and policies.

To close the workshop, Mr. Coffin facilitated a discussion in which participants identified practical next steps for developing or supporting marriage initiatives in their States. Next steps, as identified by participants, are summarized in Exhibit V.

| EXHIBIT V      |  |
|----------------|--|
| State          | Next Steps   |
| Iowa           | Compile marriage education curricula for possible use in the State   |
|                | Develop awareness about marriage through print ads   |
|                | Begin meetings to build understanding  |
| Georgia        | Develop collaborations throughout the State to move marriage projects forward                                |
| Louisiana      | Build grassroots support to sustain future marriage efforts  |
| Michigan       | Hold discussions with the new State administration on pros and cons of marriage initiatives                  |
| Minnesota      | Work with the University, TANF, and child support enforcement to set-up a framework for marriage initiatives |
| New Mexico     | Work with the University on an impact study on marriage  |
| South Carolina | Conduct a survey on marriage   |
|                | Gather marriage research to better inform policy makers and public   |
| Utah           | Conduct a review of State policies on marriage   |
|                | Hold a conference on marriage for the public in order to familiarize more people with the issues             |
|                | Obligate current funds for marriage activities   |
|                | Hold community leader conferences on marriage in order to get more partners and buy-in                       |
|                | Continue to work on fragile family projects  |
|                | Learn more about results of the Oklahoma Marriage survey   |

#### **IV. WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS**

## IV. WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

This section summarizes evaluation forms and written comments about the workshop.

### 1. WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

At the conclusion of the workshop, attendees were asked to complete an evaluation form. The form contained several sections; responses are summarized below.

#### 1.1 Evaluation Form Question: “Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5”

Exhibit VI summarizes respondents’ ratings of the workshop in terms of knowledge development, travel and logistical arrangements, and workshop organization/flow of day. The following scale was used:

1 = poor      2 = satisfactory      3 = good      4 = excellent      5 = excellent

| <b>EXHIBIT VI*</b>                  |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>OVERALL ROUNDTABLE</b>           |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| <b>Question</b>                     | <b>1</b> |          | <b>2</b> |          | <b>3</b> |          | <b>4</b> |          | <b>5</b> |          |
|                                     | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Knowledge development               | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 3        | 15.8%    | 6        | 31.6%    | 10       | 52.6%    |
| Travel and logistical information** | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 3        | 17.6%    | 5        | 29.4%    | 9        | 52.9%    |
| Session organization/Flow of day    | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 3        | 15.8%    | 9        | 47.4%    | 7        | 43.8%    |

\* Total number of respondents was 19

\*\* Total number of respondents for this question was 17

#### 1.2 Rating Scale: Attendees were given a 5-point scale, with 1 representing the lowest rating and 5 representing the highest, to rate the presentations during individual workshop sessions.

Exhibit VII summarizes respondents’ ratings of the presentation on “Overview of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative.”

| <b>EXHIBIT VII</b>  |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>OVERVIEW OF THE OKLAHOMA MARRIAGE INITIATIVE *</b>                         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| <b>Question</b>   | <b>1</b> |          | <b>2</b> |          | <b>3</b> |          | <b>4</b> |          | <b>5</b> |          |
|   | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of marriage initiatives | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 1        | 5.3%     | 11       | 57.98%   | 7        | 36.8%    |
| Speakers were knowledgeable in subject area and actively engaged the audience | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 2        | 10.5%    | 6        | 31.6%    | 11       | 57.9%    |

\* Total number of respondents was 19

Exhibit VIII summarizes the respondents' ratings of the presentation "Review of States' Current Program Strengths and Challenges on Marriage."

| <b>EXHIBIT VIII</b>   |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>REVIEW OF STATES CURRENT PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES ON MARRIAGE*</b> |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| <b>Question</b>   | <b>1</b> |          | <b>2</b> |          | <b>3</b> |          | <b>4</b> |          | <b>5</b> |          |
|   | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of marriage initiatives | 0        | 0%       | 1        | 5.2%     | 6        | 31.6%    | 6        | 31.6%    | 6        | 31.6%    |
| Speakers were knowledgeable in subject area and actively engaged the audience | 0        | 0%       | 1        | 5.2%     | 6        | 31.6%    | 7        | 36.8%    | 5        | 26.3%    |

\* Total number of respondents was 19

Exhibit IX summarizes respondents' rating of the Working Lunch: How do Human Service Organizations Adjust to Calls for Marriage and Family Friendly Policies and Services?

| <b>EXHIBIT IX</b>  |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>WORKING LUNCH: HOW DO HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS ADJUST TO CALLS FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES AND SERVICES*</b> |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| <b>Question</b>  | <b>1</b> |          | <b>2</b> |          | <b>3</b> |          | <b>4</b> |          | <b>5</b> |          |
|  | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of marriage initiatives  | 0        | 0%       | 2        | 11.1%    | 3        | 16.67%   | 8        | 44.44%   | 5        | 27.78%   |
| Speakers were knowledgeable in subject area and actively engaged the audience  | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 3        | 15.8%    | 6        | 33.3%    | 9        | 50%      |

\* Total number of respondents was 18



Exhibit X summarizes the respondents' ratings of the Panel: Implementing Marriage Services, a View from Partners.

| <b>EXHIBIT X</b>   |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>PANEL: IMPLEMENTING MARRIAGE SERVICES—A VIEW FROM PARTNERS*</b>               |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| <b>Question</b>  | <b>1</b> |          | <b>2</b> |          | <b>3</b> |          | <b>4</b> |          | <b>5</b> |          |
|  | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of marriage initiatives    | 0        | 0%       | 1        | 5.9%     | 1        | 5.9%     | 5        | 29.4%    | 10       | 58.8%    |
| Speakers were knowledgeable in subject area and actively engaged the audience ** | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 5        | 31.3%    | 11       | 68.8%    |

\* Total number of respondents was 17

\*\*Total number of respondents was 16

Exhibit XI summarizes the respondents' ratings of the presentation "Getting Your Marriage Initiative Started."

| <b>EXHIBIT XI</b>   |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>GETTING YOUR MARRIAGE INITIATIVE STARTED*</b>                              |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| <b>Question</b>   | <b>1</b> |          | <b>2</b> |          | <b>3</b> |          | <b>4</b> |          | <b>5</b> |          |
|   | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of marriage initiatives | 0        | 0%       | 2        | 10.5%    | 3        | 15.8%    | 7        | 36.8%    | 7        | 36.8%    |
| Speakers were knowledgeable in subject area and actively engaged the audience | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 1        | 5.2%     | 8        | 42.1%    | 10       | 52.6%    |

\* Total number of respondents was 19

Exhibit XII summarizes the respondents' ratings of the presentation: What States Can Do? Options From Policy Review to Program Implementation.

| <b>EXHIBIT XII</b><br><b>WHAT STATES CAN DO: OPTIONS FROM POLICY REVIEW</b><br><b>TO PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION*</b> |   |      |   |       |   |       |   |       |   |       |
|--|---|------|---|-------|---|-------|---|-------|---|-------|
| Question   | 1 |      | 2 |       | 3 |       | 4 |       | 5 |       |
|  | n | %    | n | %     | n | %     | n | %     | N | %     |
| Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of marriage initiatives                                    | 1 | 5.9% | 3 | 17.6% | 6 | 35.3% | 3 | 17.6% | 4 | 23.5% |
| Speakers were knowledgeable in subject area and actively engaged the audience                                    | 0 | 0%   | 4 | 23.5% | 5 | 29.4% | 2 | 11.8% | 6 | 35.3% |

\* Total number of respondents was 17

Exhibit XIII summarizes the respondents' ratings of the presentation: Where Do We Go from Here?

| <b>EXHIBIT XIII</b><br><b>WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? *</b>                     |   |    |   |      |   |       |   |       |   |       |
|---|---|----|---|------|---|-------|---|-------|---|-------|
| Question  | 1 |    | 2 |      | 3 |       | 4 |       | 5 |       |
|   | n | %  | n | %    | n | %     | n | %     | N | %     |
| Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of marriage initiatives | 0 | 0% | 1 | 5.9% | 5 | 29.4% | 2 | 11.8% | 9 | 52.9% |
| Speakers were knowledgeable in subject area and actively engaged the audience | 0 | 0% | 1 | 5.9% | 5 | 29.4% | 2 | 11.8% | 9 | 52.9% |

\* Total number of respondents was 17

## 2. WRITTEN COMMENTS

Participants were also given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments. A summary of their responses follows.

### 2.1 Overall Workshop: Knowledge Development, Travel and Logistical Arrangements, and Session Organization/Flow

- Very informative—Practical and data-based

- The first day was too long (8 a.m.-5p.m.)
- Robin Dade (AFYA) was excellent with logistical arrangements
- The context of the sessions was excellent
- Kendy Cox of Public Strategies was excellent and ensured that the sessions ran smoothly and professionally
- Very well put together workshop-excellent job!
- Great conference—created a lot of excitement for the issues around marriage.

## **2.2 Workshop Session: Overview of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative**

- Excellent presentation
- Presenter did not seek audience questions
- Great presentation—Mary Myrick of Public Strategies gave a thorough explanation of Oklahoma’s project
- I wanted to know what happens after PREP; a long-term strategy
- Mary Myrick of Public Strategies was excellent. She has a vision and explains things well and with passion.

## **2.3 Workshop Session: Review of States’ Current Program Strengths and Challenges on Marriage**

- I appreciated the frankness of States who responded
- Session should have been longer so we could discuss more options and detail
- The session felt rushed
- Great facilitation—nice method to seek State participation
- It would have been more helpful if the States that had started projects on marriage answered questions from the States that are not yet engaged.

**2.4 Working Lunch: How Do Human Service Organizations Adjust to Calls for Marriage and Family-friendly Policies and Services?**

- The information presented was very helpful and practical
- Very informative session
- Good discussion
- Many of the speakers talked about the same information at times
- Needed more audience engagement.

**2.5 Panel: Implementing Marriage Services—A View from Partners**

- Great information from the OK Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, the faith-based organizations, and the OK Extension
- Knowledgeable panel but minimal audience engagement
- Good information concerning approaches and different commitments
- Great to hear from the various community partners.

**2.6 Getting Your Marriage Initiative Started**

- Different viewpoints were appreciated
- Commissioner Hendrick showed demonstrated leadership and interest
- Commissioner Hendrick was very intelligent and seemed honorable
- Excellent discussions
- I question the statement that was made that marriage is a great enhancement to income.

**2.7 What States Can Do: Options from Policy Review to Program Implementation**

- The presenters missed the point of the presentation
- I question the presenters knowledge of domestic violence, especially the statement that domestic violence is more prevalent in low-income families

- Would have liked copies of the PowerPoint presentation
- The information presented was not new information. The information was theory and different from the practical applications that were presented in the other sessions of the workshop.

## **2.8 Where Do We Go From Here?**

- The 10 things you can do when you get home list was very helpful
- Important to carry forward the information shared during the conference
- States are clearly uncomfortable to committing to marriage initiatives. Everyone also believes this effort is still dependent on governor elections.

## **2.9 Benefits Anticipated as a Result of the Seminar**

- Provided ideas for us to use to steer our contractors in providing services that strengthen families
- Provided methods to make initiatives on marriage attractive
- Potential to bring opposing political powers to consensus
- I have numerous ideas on how to better structure my marriage programs this year
- The resources and new places to find information about marriage
- Validated own efforts
- Helped clarify decisions to be made (e.g., cultural vs. program and choosing partners)
- Great stimulus for ideas that can be implemented in our State
- It helped me to understand the significance of administrative support—specifically the difference and impact when a governor supports the program.
- It helped me to see what can be accomplished Statewide through collaboration with various agencies and the local community
- Ideas for conducting a survey on marriage in our State
- Ideas for making proposals for policy changes and demonstration projects

- Assurance—it seems we are on the right track and maybe a bit ahead of other States
- Contacts in other States
- Knowledge of Oklahoma’s efforts on marriage
- Realization that other States are at similar stages.

## **2.10 What Was Most Useful About This Roundtable?**

- PREP Information and listening to the field staff talk about practical applications
- I enjoyed hearing about Oklahoma’s experiences and successes. I gained some good ideas for implementation in our States projects and future proposals
- Oklahoma’s use of their survey data in designing a marriage initiative and gaining political support
- A better understanding of Oklahoma’s project
- It helped me understand the different levels of involvement of other States
- Hearing information about other States’ programs
- The realization that this is a work in progress and that nobody has all the answers
- Context of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative; how to de-politicize the topic
- Listening to Cabinet Secretary and Pastors as well as hearing Mary Myrick’s insight into what has worked for Oklahoma.

## **2.11 How Could the Roundtable Have Better Met Your Needs?**

- Caution on discussing domestic violence—some of the terms that were used by presenters were not necessarily conducive to effectiveness
- Could have given more States time to describe their efforts on marriage
- Would have liked more handouts from speakers and/or outlines of presentations
- Possibly a longer conference

- Would have liked to visit an Oklahoma site and see the program at the local level
- Too much emphasis on PREP and Oklahoma; would have liked to hear more sharing of ideas between other States and more variety of approaches on the issue.

## **APPENDIX A:**

### **AGENDA**





# Developing A Marriage Initiative for Your State

Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network

September 17 - 18, 2002

## AGENDA

**Welfare Peer TA Roundtable**  
**Westin Hotel**  
**Kiamichi Room**  
**Oklahoma City, OK**

**Tuesday, September 17, 2002**

8:15 a.m.-9:00 a.m..

**Registration and Networking Breakfast**

9:00 a.m.-9:30 a.m.

**Welcome and Introductions**

*Lois Bell, Director, Division of Training and Technical Assistance, ACF/OFA*

*John Horejsi, Federal Project Officer, ACF/OFA*

*Larry Brendel, Program Manager, TANF/Child Care, ACF Region VI*

*Raymond Haddock, Chief Coordinating Officer, Oklahoma Department of Human Services*

9:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m.

**Overview of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI)**

*OMI Team Members*

*During this session, findings from the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative statewide baseline survey will be presented, particularly those findings related to low-income families. Participants will be given an overview of the behind the scenes decisions that were the basis of the creation of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. There will be an interactive discussion on the lessons learned from the implementation and operation of the initiative, allowing participants to benefit from Oklahoma's experiences.*

10:45 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

**Break**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. | <p><b>Review of States' Current Program Strengths and Challenges on Marriage Initiatives</b></p> <p><i>Jeanette Hercik, Ph.D., Welfare Peer TA Network</i></p> <p><i>During this interactive session, participants will identify the assets their States bring to the table in promoting healthy marriages, and the challenges they face in establishing new initiatives in this arena. Marriage education resources and experts will be identified and discussed as guides for implementing a marriage initiative.</i></p>   |
| 12:15 p.m.-2:00 p.m.  | <p><b>Working Lunch: How do Human Service Organizations Adjust to Calls for Marriage and Family Friendly Policies and Services?</b></p> <p><i>Larry Brendel, Program Manager, TANF/Child Care-ACF Region VI; Moderator</i></p> <p><i>Farilyn Ballard, Chief Operating Officer Human Services Centers, OK DHS,</i></p> <p><i>Rhonda Archer, Social Services Specialist II, , Stephens County, DHS</i></p> <p><i>Joani Webster, DHS Director, Pottawatomie County,</i></p> <p><i>Mary Jo Kinzie, Programs Field Representative, OK DHS</i></p> <p><i>This session will allow participants to hear from the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, including State office and county leadership and field staff on their experiences operating marriage and family friendly programs.</i></p>  |
| 2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.   | <p><b>Panel: Implementing Marriage Services—A View From Partners</b></p> <p><i>Rachel Neal, Marriage Initiative Coordinator, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service</i></p> <p><i>Marcia Smith, Executive Director, Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault</i></p> <p><i>Rev. George Young, Holy Temple Baptist Church, OKC</i></p> <p><i>Pastor Floyd Kaiser, Southwest Church of Christ, Stonewall, OK</i></p> <p><i>Pamela Marr, Oklahoma State Department of Health Marriage Initiative Coordinator</i></p> <p><i>This session will allow participants to hear from government partners such as representatives from State agencies, community-based organizations and the faith community on their experiences running family-friendly programs and providing marriage services.</i></p> |
| 3:30 p.m.-3:45 p.m.   | <p><b>Break</b></p>   |

3:45 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

**Handling Resistance and Skepticism**

*Mary Myrick, Director of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, Public Strategies*

*During this interactive session, strategies for assessing the political environment, putting marriage on the public agenda and communicating effectively about marriage programs will be discussed. Participants will be given an opportunity to share experiences. This session will allow participants to discuss individual circumstances and barriers to establishing marriage initiatives, and collectively develop strategic plans to facilitate the establishment of a marriage program in their State.*

**Wednesday, September 18, 2002**

8:00 a.m.-8:30 a.m.

**Networking Breakfast**

8:30 a.m.-9:45 a.m.

**Getting Your Marriage Initiative Started**

*Howard Hendrick, Oklahoma Cabinet Secretary for Health and Human Services and Director, Department of Human Services*

*During this session, implementation strategies for creating a pilot program will be discussed. The session will also focus on identifying and developing collaborative relationships with community partners.*

9:45 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

**Break**

10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

**What States Can Do: Options From Policy Review to Program Implementation**

*Alan Hershey and Barbara Devaney, "Strengthening Families with Children Born Out-of-Wedlock" Project, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.*

*Mary Myrick, Director of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, Public Strategies*

*A discussion on options that participants should consider when launching marriage initiatives. The session will also focus on the unique challenges that State and county administered programs face.*

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

**Where Do We Go From Here?**

*Bill Coffin, Special Assistant for Marriage Education,  
ACF/OAS*

John Horejsi, Federal Project Officer, ACF/OFA

*During this session, participants will discuss practical next steps  
they plan to take when they return to their offices.*

12:00 p.m.-12:30 p.m.

**Closing Remarks and Evaluation**

John Horejsi, Federal Project Officer, ACF/OFA

Jeanette Hercik, Ph.D., Welfare Peer TA Network

**APPENDIX B:**  
**SPEAKER AND PARTICIPANT LIST**



# Developing A Marriage Initiative For Your State

Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network

September 17 - 18, 2002

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